

Alison Swierz
20 Whitney Ave
New Canaan, CT 06840

February 28th, 2021

Re: HB 6517

To whom it may concern,

My name is Alison Swierz, and I live in New Canaan, Connecticut. I fully support HB 6517.

When my son was a toddler he was behind in learning to talk. I took him to speech therapy and then choose the preschool through the school system believing he would get the additional services he needed. However I did not think my pleasant happy go lucky child would be ignored. It was an integrated classroom therefore they had other kids that demanded more time. I asked for my son to be evaluated and was told by the speech therapist that he dropped sounds but they weren't concerned as "they were not age appropriate yet". His preschool teacher said he had a hard time with letters and she gave me flash cards to practice with him at home.

When kindergarten started we spoke to our doctor who referred us to a neuropsychologist. We took him for testing where she diagnosed him with ADHD and language processing disorder. She told us that he was dyslexic but because he was in Kindergarten the school would dismiss the diagnosis as he was too young to formally diagnose yet.

After we received the results I started talking with other moms and discovered that we were lucky to have taken him for testing when we did. The general grade for diagnosis through the school seems to be 3rd grade at the earliest if even then. Kids flounder and struggle trying to learn to read for many years before getting the much needed assistance they deserve which breaks my heart. Looking back now on the conversations with my sons preschool and the worries we had with his speech and development at the time, it was painfully evident that he was dyslexic but our concerns fell on deaf ears. He wasn't just not producing the right sounds but he couldn't come up with the right words.

Considering they say 20% of children are dyslexic why aren't they being screened regularly in schools. They should be teaching children the way they need to learn when they are learning it and not when it's too late. We're fortunate that we were able to pay for the testing but it's extremely expensive so most children likely won't be getting tested until they have fallen well behind the curve making their lives much more challenging. This should change.

Respectfully submitted, Alison Swierz